

12. Constantinople

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The evidence from Constantinople is exceptional in two ways: firstly, the city has evidence of large numbers of statues, primarily imperial, being set up until a much later date than any other centre of the Roman world; secondly, the evidence we have consists primarily of literary texts. Surviving statuary and inscribed bases are relatively meagre.

Constantinople has produced some 200 items attesting to new late-antique statuary: twenty-six surviving sculptures, thirteen inscribed bases, and about 160 textual references.¹ This stands in obvious contrast to Rome, from which 373 bases are recorded in our database. While the rich literary evidence testifies to a flourishing intellectual life in late-antique Constantinople, the absence of inscribed bases reveals, by contrast, the very little that we know archaeologically about the city. Rome has been explored since the Renaissance, and its monuments are incomparably better known than those of Constantinople.

¹ In the case of textual references a degree of approximation is necessary. There is a possibility of duplication; many statues have been entered by us as parts of groups; and some references are very dubious.

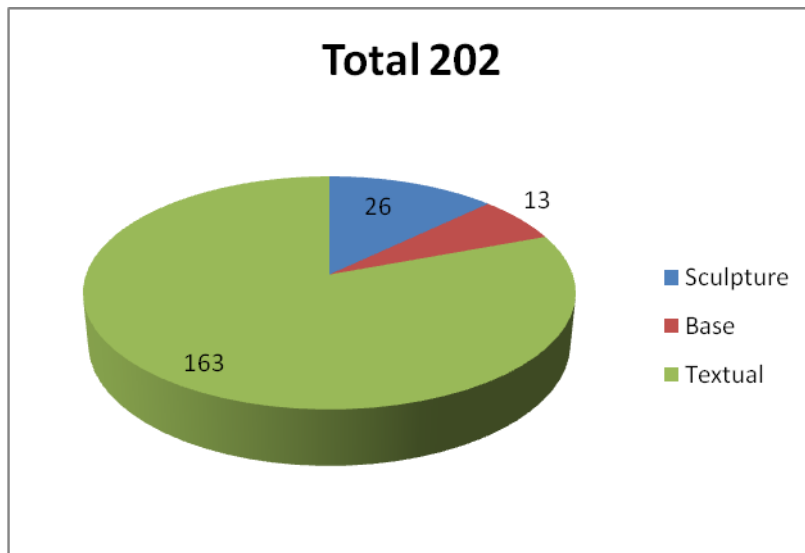


Fig. 1. Distribution of evidence from Constantinople.

Textual evidence

The textual evidence for Constantinople comes from three main source categories: (1) collections of Greek verse epigrams of the fifth and sixth centuries, now known as the *Palatine Anthology* and the *Planudean Anthology*, which include epigrams from statue bases and occasional verses about statues;² (2) occasional references to statues in historical texts, such as the sixth-century John Malalas and the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale*; and (3) a mass of evidence in an eighth-century description of the city, the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (literally 'Abridged Historical Explanations').³

The importance of the Greek epigrams is that they include material on non-imperial statuary, which is rare in the other textual sources, and that they record the names of the awarders of the statues (which are less often noted in our

² The *Planudean Anthology* is published as Book 16 of the *Palatine Anthology* in modern scholarly editions.

³ Cameron and Herrin 1984.

other texts).⁴ Some of this evidence can be questioned – were all the epigrams that were ostensibly from statue bases really set up in this fashion, or were some of them flights of fantasy?⁵ The discovery of two bases to the charioteer Porphyrius in Constantinople (LSA 349 and 361), which include on them verses which were recorded in the anthologies, lends strong support to the ‘reality’ of at least a number of these statue epigrams.⁶ But there are further problems with the poetic evidence. Some poems describing the virtues of individuals, without specific reference to an image, might have come from statue bases, but could have been ‘free-standing’ poems. We have therefore included in our database only poems that explicitly mention an image.⁷ But even these can be problematic, because when the term *eikon* is used we cannot always be certain that a statue rather than a bust or a painting is being referred to – since the word can be used for any of these honorific portrait formats.⁸

The historical texts in the form in which they survive are mostly much later than the statues they refer to, but they were almost certainly based on earlier, lost, evidence, and, as far as we can tell, the information they provide on statuary is generally reliable. By contrast, the *Parastaseis*

⁴ For example, LSA 344, 476, and 488 (all Constantinople); LSA 227 (Aphrodisias), 486 (Smyrna), 548 (Miletus), and 663 (Myrina). Our database contains 148 bases with verse inscriptions.

⁵ Bauer 2007.

⁶ Another poem from the Greek anthologies has recently been found on a base in the agora of Smyrna, LSA 2588.

⁷ For example *Anthologia Planudea* 74; cf. Robert 1948, 16.

⁸ Examples: LSA 476, 477, and 481 (Constantinople); LSA 484 (Berytus).

and the closely related *Patria* (which on this subject are heavily dependent on the *Parastaseis*) bring with them a number of problems. They associate several statues with fanciful stories,⁹ while rarely recording the persons or institutions that erected them.¹⁰ More seriously, some of their attributions range from the extremely dubious to the clearly fanciful: examples are the statues of the 'crooked Firmillianus' (LSA 408), of Constantine VI on a column at the *Exakionion* (LSA 2823), of Justinian II (LSA 2824), of the emperor Valentinian holding a bushel at the *Modion* (LSA 2504), of a kneeling emperor (LSA 2796), and of the eunuch Plato (LSA 2790). Although individual entries are extremely suspect (and are clearly identified as such in the LSA database), there is however, enough evidence in other sources to support the broad picture we get from the *Parastaseis*, of Constantinople as a city full of newly-erected imperial statuary right up to the end of the sixth century. We would not want to rely on the evidence for any individual statue in the *Parastaseis* and *Patria* unless supported elsewhere; but we believe the broad picture they offer is trustworthy.

The cumulative literary evidence reveals a city with a distinctive pattern of statue use. Constantinople through the fourth and fifth centuries acquired a series of monumental imperial *fora*, for the most part, laid out along the axis of its principal street, the *Mese*, culminating in the area of the

⁹ Examples: LSA 2777, 2778, and 2791.

¹⁰ LSA 29 to Theodosius II, allegedly set up by the eunuch Chrysarius, is only known from the *Patria*. This is true also for the family group of Justin II in the harbour of Sophia (LSA 345, 346, 473, 474, and 2767), said to have been set up at the request of the emperor. And LSA 2745 and 2746, to Marcian (450-7) and his wife Pulcheria, are said to have been erected by the emperor Leo.

hippodrome, imperial palace, and Hagia Sophia. These imperial fora were landmarks of the urban topography, highlighted by prominent columnar monuments bearing imperial images, around which subsidiary statuary was clustered.¹¹ The main streets, that linked these fora, were adorned with colonnades (*emboloi*),¹² and scattered evidence suggests that these too displayed honorific statues in a manner similar to that attested archaeologically at sites such as Ephesus. Whereas most cities had a clear central core (generally the main forum), where statuary was concentrated, in Constantinople the distribution of statuary was more diffuse and linear.

Non-imperial statuary

Most of our literary evidence concerns imperial statues. This is partly because these were the most famous monuments, connected to the principal figures in the history of the city and set up in its most prominent locations. The imperial fora were dominated by statues of their founder emperors and functioned as important stations in the developed imperial ceremonial of the Byzantine periods. This explains why the medieval authors are interested in them. There is much less evidence for statuary to personages below the level of the imperial family. In the absence of archaeological evidence, it is impossible to say conclusively whether this reflects the true position in Late Antiquity, or is a quirk of the evidence. Probably the reality is a mixture of the two. We have some literary evidence for non-imperial statues: for instance, the politician and orator Themistius tells us that two statues were erected to him (LSA 467 and 468), and a few epigrams in the anthologies, some of them explicitly referring

¹¹ Bauer 1996, 146-7, figs. 47-9; 365-6.

¹² Mundell Mango 2001.

to Constantinople, were clearly from statue bases (LSA 344, 478, and 488), including the large number of charioteer epigrams (LSA 489, 499-507, and 511). Others may also have been from statue bases (LSA 476, 477, and 481).

The non-imperial honorands that we know from the literary evidence, although few, are diverse in character but generally high-ranking, as we would expect in a great imperial city: consuls (LSA 344, 353, and 477), prefects of Constantinople (471 and 476), praetorian prefects (LSA 344, 471, and 477), a distinguished rhetor and politician (Themistius, LSA 467 and 468), a famous doctor (LSA 348), military commanders (from the fifth century onwards, LSA 353, 478, and 2794),¹³ and one distinguished figure from the western empire (Lucius Aurelius Symmachus, LSA 343). There is even good evidence of a statue set up in the 330s to an allied barbarian chieftain (LSA 2635). As in Rome, some of these statues are known to have been of gilded bronze, a material of the highest prestige (LSA 343, 344, 477, 478, and 2794). What is exceptional in Constantinople is that these statues were still being erected in the sixth century when even in Rome the statue habit was effectively dead. The sixth-century evidence is primarily literary and can be questioned, but it includes the series of bases to charioteers (discussed below), two of which have actually been discovered (LSA 349 and 361). Most of the sixth-century figures commemorated are, as we would expect, high officials in the imperial civil and military administration: Belisarius of 529/62 (LSA 2794), a quaestor of the palace of 522/7 (LSA 488), a prefect of the city of 537/42 (LSA 485), a

¹³ In Rome, too, military commanders began to be honoured from around 400, with a series of bases to Stilicho. On military commanders in Constantinople, see Bauer 2003, 505-7.

consul and praetorian prefect of the mid-sixth century (LSA 477), and a military commander and cousin of the emperor, Nicetas, of 610/25 (LSA 478). This last statue, of Nicetas, is the very last reliably documented new honorific statue dedication in the entire LSA database. A new category of honorand, however, also appears - officials specifically linked to the court. A dedication to a *quaestor sacri palatii* of 522/7 (LSA 488) comes apparently from a bronze statue, and one to a *praepositus sacri cubiculi* of the mid-sixth century (LSA 481) certainly accompanied an image, possibly a statue.

The evidence of surviving non-imperial statuary from Constantinople is not extensive (some nineteen pieces, some of them very fragmentary - by comparison with some fifty from Rome).¹⁴ With some interesting exceptions, which we will come to, what we have is broadly similar to late-antique statuary elsewhere. Five statues, some fragmentary, wore the new costumes, the *chlamys* (LSA 1160, 1167, and 1168) or the late-antique toga (1033 and 1040). Two of the *chlamydati* have un-jewelled belts (LSA 1160 and 1167) and are certainly not imperial. The other *chlamydati* and the two *togati* could be of emperors but are more likely to be non-imperial.

Some pieces are of a very high quality, comparable to that found in contemporary Aphrodisias (LSA 1033, 1040, 1160, and 1167). The most remarkable pieces, with the characteristic high finish of sculpture designed to be displayed indoors, are a female bust now in the Metropolitan Museum (LSA 8), and a long-haired male bust found in the centre of the city (LSA 375), wearing a himation and a fillet, certainly of an intellectual figure.

¹⁴ Some of these pieces, now in museums around the world, are not certainly but probably of Constantinopolitan origin (LSA 8, 443, and 444).

Constantinople has also produced three very similar shield portraits, presumably from the same group (although none has a good provenance), with male figures holding books, two of which have prominent crosses on their cover (LSA 2416, 2417, and 2418). The Christian iconography and their stylistic features point to a fifth-century date. These shield portraits belong to an established tradition of representing writers and other intellectual figures in this form (the most famous late-antique group is that from Aphrodisias), but here, uniquely, the traditional iconography and the medium of three-dimensional sculpture have been adopted for Christian subjects.¹⁵ The shield portraits show Constantinople to have been a centre of innovation in statuary, as in other artistic fields.

The city has also produced evidence for an entire category of honorand, completely absent elsewhere: eighteen attested bases for charioteer statues set up in the hippodrome.¹⁶ These are remarkable in a number of different ways: the two surviving bases (LSA 349 and 361) were covered in relief decoration describing the victories of the charioteers honoured; they are massive in size; and they are covered in inscriptions, both verse and prose. Furthermore, they were set up in a space particularly suited to the honorands, the hippodrome, and they date from relatively short period, the

¹⁵ A full-size torso with traces of a beard and holding a book (LSA 2420) may also represent a Christian subject - certainly the iconography is unique within our sample, and its costume, opening in front, is wholly anomalous.

¹⁶ LSA 349, 361, 489, 499-507, and 511. One of them is probably from a smaller hippodrome, LSA 489.

late fifth to early sixth century.¹⁷ The charioteer bases show that statues to non-imperial figures, in this case even individuals of humble social rank, were entirely possible in Constantinople.

On the other hand, there seems not to have been in Constantinople the kinds of pressure that filled late-antique Rome with non-imperial statuary. In Rome, particularly in the forum of Trajan, we know of an active interaction through statuary between the emperors, senate, and individual aristocrats, and that statues were used to express the gratitude of clients of different kinds (provincials, guildsmen, and even individuals) to their patrons. There was even a strong tradition of erecting statues to family members, both dead and alive. In Rome, not only public spaces, but also the semi-public confines of the aristocratic *domus* were filled with statues.¹⁸ There is no evidence from Constantinople of these pressures applying in anything like the same force that they did in Rome. Constantinople certainly had many more non-imperial statues than we have record of, but almost certainly these were far fewer than those in Rome. Imperial statues clearly dominated, if not numerically, certainly in terms of their visual impact.

Imperial statuary

The statue evidence from Constantinople is dominated by imperial statues, some 130 out of the total of 200 in our database. As discussed above, this high proportion surely does not accurately reflect the original situation, but there is no

¹⁷ Cameron 1973, esp. 222-58.

¹⁸ Forum of Trajan: Bauer 1996, 93-100. 'Private fora': Bauer 1997. Aristocratic houses: Gehn 2012a.

doubt that imperial statues dominated in Constantinople and that new statues were being erected up to the beginning of the seventh century, long after the statue habit had died elsewhere. As discussed above in Chapter 11, the famous column of Phocas of AD 608 in Rome (LSA 1313) was there a complete 'outlier', while the two columns of Phocas in Constantinople (LSA 2774, 2775) stood at the end of a long and continuous tradition.

In such a major city, which from the reign of Theodosius I became the fixed residence of the emperor, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the imperial statue monuments were spectacularly large. The most impressive were the two columns of Theodosius I and Arcadius (LSA 2458 and 2459), with spiral reliefs and surmounted by colossal bronze statues, and the Golden Gate with its statue apparently drawn by four elephants (LSA 2497). Hardly less impressive were the statue of Constantine on a porphyry column set in the middle of his forum (LSA 2457) and the gigantic equestrian statue of Justinian I on a column in the Augusteion (LSA 2463). Something of the impressive nature of this statuary can be seen in the colossal cuirassed bronze statue of an emperor now in Barletta (LSA 441), which came almost certainly from Constantinople. We know of little that compares with this scale of honorific statuary elsewhere. The monuments of the fifth and sixth centuries in particular stand out in contrast to those of contemporary Rome and Ravenna, a clear expression of the shift in wealth and power to the east.

The imperial statuary of Constantinople, as elsewhere, is marked by the frequent use of exotic and expensive materials. Porphyry was used for columns supporting statues (LSA 27, 2457, 2759, 2776, and 2808), most famously for Constantine's surviving column (LSA 2457), and also for surviving statuary

(LSA 4 with 439, 454, 1165, 1166, 2799), which includes a much discussed porphyry head now in Venice (LSA 454). Imperial statues were sometimes of silver (LSA 27, 2504, 2719, 2737, and 2816), something attested in our period only for imperial capitals.

A distinctive feature of imperial statue display in Constantinople was the use for the most important commemorative monuments of tall columns as bases, often designed as the central feature of a square. This pattern was established by Constantine with the large porphyry column in the middle of his forum and was repeatedly imitated later, most famously by Theodosius and Arcadius in their fora with spiral-relief-decorated columns. The construction and materials of the columns varied: some were made up of individual drums (such as that of Constantine, LSA 2457; or that of Leo, LSA 2462), some were monolithic (such as the column of Theodosius II at the Hebdomon, LSA 31, and Marcian's column on his forum, LSA 2461); some were of masonry and brick (like the column of Justinian on the Augusteion, LSA 2463, originally coated in bronze). Their common feature was of course to raise the imperial figure high above the onlooker.¹⁹ The practice continued to the end of the statue habit in Constantinople: two honorific column monuments are recorded for the emperor Phocas (602-10) (LSA 2774 and 2775). Whether these all originally carried inscriptions is uncertain - there is no record, for instance, of inscriptions on the bases of the columns of Constantine (LSA 2457), Theodosius (LSA 2458), Arcadius (LSA 2459), and Justinian (LSA 2463).²⁰

¹⁹ This practice was imitated in a few provincial cities, for instance at Justiniana Prima, LSA 1784.

²⁰ A column to Eudoxia, LSA 27, and the famous one to Marcian, LSA 2461, do bear inscriptions.

The record of imperial statuary in Constantinople begins with some problematic cases: three literary attestations of tetrarchic statues (LSA 28, 2791, and 2821) in prominent places in the city, including the imperial loge (*kathisma*) of the hippodrome (LSA 28); and parts of two under-life-size statue groups - one is the famous porphyry group now in Venice (LSA 4 with 439; 456). The literary references may be without foundation, and it is certainly difficult to explain why a statue of Maximian stood in the Chalke (LSA 2821), but the surviving groups cannot be questioned.²¹ The Venetian tetrarchs carved in high relief on porphyry columns cannot have come from a small provincial town such as Byzantium was, and were surely brought from elsewhere.²² The one tetrarch whom we might expect to find in Constantinople, Constantine's father Constantius I, is completely absent from our surviving evidence.

There is naturally much evidence for statues of Constantine, but it consists mainly of later literary accounts that are often contaminated by the knowledge that he was the founder of the city and the first Christian emperor. It is unlikely, for example, that recorded statues of Constantine holding a cross, in most cases accompanied by his mother Helena (LSA 2788, 2795, 2811, and 2813) could ever have been set up in the early fourth century, because this iconography does not appear on any reliably recorded statues or in coinage until very much later. A statue of Constantine, however, on

²¹ Particularly since the discovery of the tetrarchic foot, missing from the Venetian group, at the probable site of the Philadelphion, LSA 439.

²² There is an argument that they were re-touched and re-dedicated at a later date, Laubscher 1999, 230-2.

the porphyry column standing in the middle of his forum, is certain - although there has been dispute and speculation about the precise nature and meaning of the statue that stood on top (LSA 2457). Dynastic groups are a striking feature of the Constantinian evidence: one that reputedly once stood in the area of Hagia Sophia (LSA 2779 with 2780, 2781, 2782, and 2785), one on the forum of Constantine itself (LSA 2789), one allegedly at a palace in the Taurus region (LSA 2802 and 2803), at least one at the Philadelphion (LSA 2814, and see also LSA 2819 and 2820), and one at the Augusteion (2817 with 2818). Not all of these groups were necessarily correctly identified by our literary texts, but a serious Constantinian attempt to stress dynastic continuity does seem apparent. The repeated references to statues of Helena (LSA 2785, 2811, 2814, and 2822) are plausible, because she is a figure well-represented in the empire-wide record, in both east and west. There are, for example, two bases recorded for her at Neapolis in Campania (LSA 1875 and 1876) and three bases at Side in Pamphylia (LSA 262, 263, and 2098). Of all the imperial women of our period, Helena is much the most frequently recorded recipient of statue honours in our evidence.

Before the Theodosian period, imperial wives appear only rarely in the record. There is an account of statues of Constantine and his wife Fausta made of mixed bronze and stone in the senate house of Constantinople (LSA 2799), and two literary references in the *Parastaseis* to representations of Julian and his wife Helena, in one case misnamed 'Anastasia' (LSA 2802 and 2820). The statues of Helena have no reliable parallels elsewhere in the empire, despite a rich epigraphic record for the emperor Julian, and are probably erroneous.²³

²³ The *Parastaseis* also record statues in Nicomedia of Julian and his wife in the guise of Apollo and Artemis, LSA 2805. If true, which sadly cannot

The record of imperial statuary of the Valentinianic dynasty in Constantinople is thin – perhaps to be explained by the priorities of most of the literary sources and by the fact that the emperors of the dynasty spent remarkably little time in the city. There is one reliable attestation from the rhetor Themistius recording a bronze statue of Gratian (the Elder), father of Valens and Valentinian I, almost certainly erected in 364 (LSA 2703). This prefigures the practice of the Theodosian period of including statues of the ruler's dead father.²⁴

There are two developments in the Theodosian period. Firstly, there was the re-emergence of statue monuments on the grandest scale: the columns of Theodosius himself (LSA 2458), and of his son Arcadius (LSA 2459), and the great gate erected by Theodosius' grandson Theodosius II (LSA 2497). Secondly, a strong family or dynastic element re-emerges in recorded imperial statuary, which lasts until the very end of honorific statuary in the city. Imperial women feature prominently in the evidence for the first time since the exceptional case of Helena: Aelia Flacilla, wife of Theodosius I (LSA 2729); Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius (LSA 27, 2792, 2793); Pulcheria, the powerful sister of Theodosius II (LSA 2737, apparently with two of her sisters; 2740, 2746, and 2747). Whole dynastic groups, comparable to those recorded for Constantinian times, featured in prominent sites of the city: the Forum Tauri of Theodosius (LSA 2458 with 494, 2723, and 2724); the Augusteion

be verified, these would be the very last representations in Roman art of an imperial couple in the guise of deities.

²⁴ Theodosius the Elder: LSA 721, 1695, 2725, 2730, and 2731. See also LSA 2722.

(LSA 2719, 2720, and 2721); the Milion (LSA 2713, 2714, and 2715); the Chalke (LSA 2722); one of the senate houses (LSA 2729); and again in one of the senate houses, a group of busts, accompanied by a full-sized statue (LSA 2738, 2739, 2740, and 2741). The one significant piece of imperial statuary surviving from Constantinople is of the Theodosian period - a high-quality head of a youthful emperor, usually thought to be either Arcadius or Theodosius II, but without identifiable features (LSA 337).

The record of imperial statues continues through the later fifth century, with five statues of Marcian (LSA 34, 2461, 2734, 2744, and 2745), including his surviving column on the northern branch of the Mese, probably the location of his forum, one of Leo (LSA 2748), two of Zeno (LSA 108, 495) and three of Anastasius (LSA 497, 2752, and 2753).²⁵ Anastasius also had the temerity to appropriate the massive column of Theodosius I for a statue to himself (LSA 2458) after the original statue had been brought down by an earthquake. From this period we have no evidence of family groups, but a remarkable number of statues of imperial women: some of those of Pulcheria mentioned above may well date from the period she was married to Marcian (LSA 2737, 2740, 2746, and 2747); Verina, wife of Leo (LSA 105, 106, and 107); and Ariadne, wife of Zeno (LSA 109, and 496; see also 2750). One of the statues of Marcian, set up in the forum of Arcadius (LSA 2734), was surely intended to stress the continuity of his rule with that of the Theodosian dynasty. These late-fifth century imperial statues in Constantinople stand out when we note that there is

²⁵ These are not necessarily all reliable - for instance, one to Anastasius was reputedly, and improbably, of iron (LSA 2753).

no good evidence of imperial statuary from this period in any provincial city.²⁶

In sixth-century Constantinople, the numbers of recorded imperial statues do not decline significantly, and the pattern of imperial statuary accompanied by dynastic groups, and a large number of statues of imperial women continues. Justin I (518-27) was honoured with his family at the Chalke (LSA 2755), and his wife Euphemia by a statue in the quarter called *ta Olybriou* (LSA 2756). Justinian was honoured with the major monument in the Augusteion (LSA 2463) and with statues in the hippodrome (LSA 492), at the Hebdomon (LSA 2760), and, with his wife Theodora, in the baths of Zeuxippus (LSA 2758). Theodora was further honoured with a statue in the baths of Arcadius (LSA 2759).

Justinian's successor, Justin II (565-78), seems to have been very fond of statues for himself and his family, some of which, according to our literary sources, were of quite distant relatives. He was honoured with statues in the harbour that he rebuilt in the name of his wife Sophia (LSA 474), in an unknown location (LSA 498), in the baths of Zeuxippus (LSA 2764), in the quarter of the city known as *to Deuteron* (LSA 2765), at the praetorium (LSA 2768), and possibly with a further gilded statue (LSA 2770). His wife Sophia had an equal number of statues: in her harbour (LSA 473), at the Milion (LSA 2761), in the baths of Zeuxippus (LSA 2763), at the Chalke (LSA 2766), at the praetorium (LSA 2769), and a further possible gilded statue (LSA 2770). Arabia, probably his daughter, was honoured at the harbour of Sophia (LSA 346) and

²⁶ The only possible exceptions, though we do not think they are for statues, are the inscriptions LSA 13, from Salona, and LSA 1986, from Tarraco.

at the Milion (LSA 347); a niece, Helena, at the Milion (LSA 2762); and his mother Vigilantia (or Viglentina) at the harbour of Sophia (LSA 2767). After Justin II, the evidence does begin to thin out, though Tiberius (578-82) was honoured at the Chalke (LSA 2772), and Maurice (582-602) at the Magnaura (LSA 2773), and apparently in a family group at the Chalke (LSA 118). The very last imperial statues were of Phocas (602-10), one at the Magnaura (LSA 2774) and one at the Artopoleion (LSA 2775). With Phocas, reliable records of imperial statue dedications end. There are no records of statues of Heraclius, but his nephew, the military commander Nicetas, did receive the very last statue of Constantinople and of the entire Roman world, in 610-625 (LSA 478) - a gilded equestrian column monument.²⁷

Possible illustrations:

Bust of philosopher

Evangelist bust

Toga statue

(chlamys statue with belt)

²⁷ Later references to imperial statues are extremely dubious and in our opinion best discounted (LSA 2823, 2824, and 2825).